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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**50 CFR Part 648**

**[Docket No. 140117052-4402-02]**

**RIN 0648-XD799**

**Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Summer Flounder Fishery; Quota Transfer**

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; quota transfer.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces that the State of North Carolina is transferring a portion of its 2015 commercial summer flounder quota to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. These quota adjustments are necessary to comply with the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan quota transfer provision. This announcement is intended to inform the public of the revised commercial quota for each state involved.

**DATES:** Effective [*Insert date of filing for public inspection at the Office of the Federal Register*], through December 31, 2015.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Reid Lichwell, Fishery Management Specialist, 978-281-9112.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Regulations governing the summer flounder fishery are

in 50 CFR 648.100-110. These regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is apportioned among the coastal states from North Carolina through Maine. The process to set the annual commercial quota and the percent allocated to each state are described in § 648.10(c)(1)(i).

The final rule implementing Amendment 5 to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan provided a mechanism for summer flounder quota to be transferred from one state to another (December 17, 1993; 58 FR 65936). Two or more states, under mutual agreement and with the concurrence of the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Administrator, can transfer or combine summer flounder commercial quota under § 648.102(c)(2). The Regional Administrator is required to consider the criteria in § 648.102(c)(2)(i) when evaluating requests for quota transfers or combinations.

North Carolina has agreed to transfer 10,860 lb (4,926 kg) of its 2015 commercial quota to Massachusetts. This transfer was prompted by landings of the F/V *Poseidon*, a North Carolina vessel that was granted safe harbor in Massachusetts due to a medical emergency, on February 8, 2015. As a result of these landings, a quota transfer is necessary to account for an increase in Massachusetts landings that would have otherwise accrued against the North Carolina quota.

The Regional Administrator has determined that the criteria set forth in § 648.102(c)(2)(i) have been met. These transfers are consistent with the criteria because they will not preclude the overall annual quota from being fully harvested, the transfers address an unforeseen variation or contingency in the fishery, and the transfers are consistent with the objectives of the FMP and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The revised summer flounder commercial quotas for calendar year 2015 are: Massachusetts, 760,795 lb (345,091 kg); and North Carolina, 2,994,691 lb (1,358,368 kg).

**Classification**

This action is taken under 50 CFR part 648 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: March 2, 2015

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Alan D. Risenhoover,

Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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